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Freak wave



While \$4000 of equipment sank, some tackle trays and an esky of beer were salvaged from the sinking dinghy.

Picture: Josie Ibrahim

Fishers plucked from shark-infested waters

FLIP PRIOR

TWO Broome fishermen are lucky to be alive after their 4m dinghy was struck by a freak wave 4km offshore.

The incident left them treading water for almost an hour in shark-infested waters.

Edward Fleming, 26, and Tom Godfrey, 24, left Town Beach about 11am last Sunday to fish in Roebuck Bay. Half an hour later, the wave hit the starboard side, knocking both men overboard.

"Tom fell on to me and then I fell out – and then Tom fell out of the boat," Mr Fleming said.

The boat, with their safety equipment – life jackets, radio and flares, continued 100m until another wave struck, spinning it in circles as the motor locked right.

The men stayed close, treading water until they attracted attention of people in a boat in the distance by splashing water as high as they could.

After the men were safely aboard the other vessel, they unsuccessfully tried to stall the dinghy's motor by jamming it with rope.

Broome Volunteer Sea Rescue arrived but by then the boat had taken so much water it capsized.

About \$4000 worth of equipment including fishing rods



Tom Godfrey's boat spinning in circles with its motor locked right, as another boat approaches.

quickly sank, but Mr Godfrey dived in and salvaged a couple of tackle trays and an esky full of beer.

Mr Fleming also jumped in despite concerns about "a hell of a lot of bait" in the water.

"When the boat went down, I wasn't too keen on jumping in... (but) I thought I'd better go down with my skipper – he loves his boat," he said.

The upturned boat was towed back to shore.

Earlier this week the pair admitted it was only later that it sank in how lucky they had been. The day before, on Saturday, they were fishing in the same waters and snagged five bronze whaler sharks just minutes after throwing lines in.

Broome Fishing Club spokeswoman Sara Hennessy said she had been fishing not far from where the men fell out that day and was blown away by the num-

ber of sharks attacking fish she was trying to reel in.

"We get a lot of bull sharks up this way which are very aggressive," she said.

Broome Volunteer Sea Rescue skipper Colin Kenworthy said the two men had also narrowly missed being run over by the out-of-control boat.

"The incident highlights the importance of safe boating, wearing life jackets and a lanyard that stops the motor if you fall overboard," he said.

Mr Godfrey was forced to take time off work this week with blistering sunburn on his face, chest and back.

However, he said he felt extremely lucky to survive.

For his part, Mr Fleming took out a new life insurance policy on Monday.

"If the boat had kept going, we would have been in a bit of strife," he said.